

THE CHOSEN

Written by

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"THE CHOSEN"

FADE IN:

CLOSE-UP, under credits, of cover of 1999 CHRISTIAN BROTHERS HIGH SCHOOL yearbook and hand turning to "CLASS OF 1999". Full-frame shots of each of the following, under graduation portraits:

"RICHARD T. FOLEY"

"There are two essential strategies for success in business: 1. Never reveal all you know. 2. - *Anon.*"

"Chess Club, 1,2; Chorus, 1,2; Debate Team, 2; Junior Achievement, 3,4; Young Republicans, 4".

"HALSTON KOHLFELDT"

"In the name of God, stop a moment, cease your work, look around you. - *Leo Tolstoy*"

"Christians in Action, 1; JV Track & Field, 1; Philosophy Club, 2-4".

"EUGENIO V. MENENDEZ"

"Love is my Sword, Goodness my Armor, and Humor my Shield. - *Unknown*"

"Band, 1,2; Chorus, 4; Drama, 3,4; Pacific Islanders Club, 1-4; Varsity Wrestling, 2-4.

"ADRIANNA P. WONG"

"If you judge people, you have no time to love them. - *Sister Theresa*"

"Band, 1-4; Chorus, 1-4; Christians in Action, 1-4; 1st Violin, Student Symphony, 3-4; Philosophy Club, 3,4.

EXT. SACRAMENTO CITY COLLEGE - DAY

PAN from sign identifying campus to RICHARD, EUGENIO, ADRIANNA, and HALSTON walking toward class. Richard, loudly, and Eugenio, physically and laughing, are clowning, Adrianna is as bemused as her shy sensitivity permits, and Halston - book in hand - is only semi-engaged.

INT. SACRED HEART CHURCH - DAY

Richard is in shirt and tie at Sunday Mass with his parents, mute as they and the congregation labor to keep up with the choir. Looking bored and yawning, he turns to meet his father's unamused gaze. He forces a smile until his Dad looks away, then rolls his eyes.

INT. NEWMAN CATHOLIC COMMUNITY - DAY

As interim pastor FATHER JACK distributes Communion, nearby EUGENIO exchanges smiling and playful shoves with his little brother as they, other siblings and their parents, an appealing mixture of reverence and bemusement, wait in line.

INT. SUBURBAN RESIDENCE - NIGHT

In a spare, neat family room, ADRIANNA concludes a classical violin piece, accompanied by her mother on piano. Her father, standing behind his wife with his hand on her shoulder, beams and nods his approval. On the piano is a family portrait - just the three of them.

INT. MIDTOWN APARTMENT - EVENING

A book in front of him, HALSTON slouches at a mismatched dinette in a worn kitchen, staring out the window. Smoke curls from the oven. His waitress-uniformed mother rushes in and snatches out a blackened roast, dropping it on the range and fanning her hands. Halston snaps out of it. Glaring, she stalks to the freezer and clatters a frozen entree in front of him. She hesitates as concern overtakes annoyance, and touches his shoulder before dashing out.

EXT. NEW HELVETIA COFFEEHOUSE - DAY

CLOSE-UP of a used paperback copy of William Dembski's *Intelligent Design*, riding in the back pocket of Halston's worn jeans-shorts, whose back comes into view as he lopes toward the door.

INT. NEW HELVETIA - DAY

The edge is coming off the mid-day rush. Pan to a table for four, now seating three - Richard, Eugenio and Adrianna are finishing lunch. Halston is framed in the doorway.

RICH

About damned time! YO! HAL!

HALSTON

Tall, double, half-caf latte,
no foam, chocolate, and an
apple-cinnamon scone?

Halston stiffly seats himself.

RICH

You're late - as usual - so
we didn't order for you. As
usual.

ADRIANNA

Ease up, Rich. Low-stress,
okay?

Greetings are exchanged as Halston orders.

RICH

So - what is it this time?
Nose in a book or just
daydreaming?

HAL

I, uh --

EUGENIO

I don't know about you, but I
got six quarters on "Dry"
across the street.

ADRIANNA

Geen-O - ever the class
clown. (In stage voice.)
"Nice to see you again, Hal."

HALSTON

Thanks, babe. Part-A guilty,
Rich . . .

He pulls the book from his pocket.

HALSTON (CONT.)

I'm still wrestling with this
"Creator of Us All" theory.

RICH

Aww, Jeeez --

HALSTON

No, his Father.

EUGENIO

Isn't there a bird in there
somewhere, too?

ADRIANNA

(to Richard)

It wouldn't kill you to take
a few moments out of your
crushing schedule to ponder
your place in the universe,
Material Boy.

RICH

Hey, I know exactly where I
am - three credits short of a
UC transfer, business degree
and Baghdad-by-the-Bay. Big
bucks. Beemer. Babes. End
of story.

EUGENIO

Dude! I wish I was that
confident about my Computer
Science degree and the
Valley. Even from Sac State,
C++ and Visual Basics were a
free pass outta here a year
ago. I might be eating cat
food before my parents.

RICH

How 'bout you, Ms. Liberal
Arts? Gonna parlay that
high-school fiddling award
and that Fine Arts degree
into a killer career?

ADRIANNA

I might. If I do or don't,
at least it'll be my choice -
and not my father's!

EUGENIO

Reminds me - glad I got my
old man to cosign on my
student loans.

RICH

Butt out, Geeno - no cavalry
rescue this time.

Rich turns his anger on Halston.

RICH (CONT.)

At least there's an old man
still in the picture, and I'm
helping part-time, unlike
Book-Boy here! 'Ssup, Hal?
Still letting your MOM
support your 35-bucks-a-
credit habit on her
waitressing wages, huh?!

Rich kicks back his chair and starts for the door.

RICH (CONT.)

If you're gonna have a voyage
of self-discovery, Man, you
oughtta be able to chip in
for the ticket. Oh - and you
might wanna figure out where
you're landing before you
shove off!

EUGENIO

I'd love to stay and monitor
the oxygen, but I'm folding
and Rich is driving.

Eugenio follows Rich out. Halston's order arrives.
Adrianna takes his hand.

ADRIANNA

Hal, he doesn't mean to be so
hurtful, really . . .

A beat. To herself:

ADRIANNA (CONT.)

I just don't understand why
it always seems to end this
way.

HALSTON

Naw - it's okay. He's right.
I'm totally adrift. Don't
have the first clue where I
belong. It's unfair - to
Mom, the guys . . .

Halston looks into her eyes.

HALSTON (CONT.)

And to you.

Adrianna drops her gaze and flushes. She breaks her grip and resolutely gathers her belongings while Halston self-consciously wraps his pastry in a napkin and picks up his coffee to leave.

EXT. NEW HELVETIA - DAY

Halston and Adrianna hold hands outside the coffeehouse. He studies her fingers, troubled. She is tender but apprehensive.

ADRIANNA

You know, Hal, things could
be like they were between us
Senior year. That door's
still open and -

HALSTON

Oh, God . . .

ADRIANNA

. . . And it can stay open
until you close it.

HALSTON

I can't, Adrianna. I'm past that, but I'm still in-between, you know? You're so THERE already, with so much to give. I don't even know where - or who - I am yet.

Halston breaks his grip and strides off, balancing his late lunch and burying his emotions. Adrianna tearfully watches him leave.

EXT. SUTTER'S FORT - DAY

Halston meanders, reading and sipping. His attention is drawn by loud derision to a young TOUGH confronting BICYCLE MAN, homeless and walking a worn and oddly-decorated bicycle.

BICYCLE MAN is older, Black, tall and slender, with greasy but tame dreadlocks. Costumed in a weirdly understated way, his eyes invisible behind dark wraparounds, he is silent dignity.

TOUGH

Yo! What you doin' on my sidewalk? Gotta bike - should be in the street, Man. Wazzup? Too crazy to talk to me? Maybe I should loosen your tongue a little bit!

Halston drops his coffee, stows the book and fishes out the scone. Crossing his eyes, he gimps absurdly toward the pair.

HALSTON

UNCLE BOB! IS THAT YOU? I GOT YOUR LUNCH!

Tough jerks his eyes toward Halston. Confused, he backs off a little as Halston stumbles into and regards him with insane myopia.

HALSTON

OH - HI! ARE YOU THE WARDEN?
BECAUSE BOB'S OUT, YOU KNOW?
SORRY! I GOT NO LUNCH FOR
YOU TODAY!

TOUGH

WAY too crazy for me! Later
for you, Homes!

HALSTON

OKAY - SORRY! G'BYE, THEN!

Still in character, Halston watches Tough #1's swaggering retreat, then turns and shrugs at Bicycle Man.

HALSTON

So - want an apple-cinnamon
scone?

Bicycle Man takes his measure, wordlessly and expressionless. Deliberately, he takes the scone, places it in the bike's basket, turns around and leaves.

HALSTON

Coffee's all gone. Sorry . . .

EXT. CATHEDRAL OF THE BLESSED SACRAMENT - NIGHT

On the front steps, FATHER JACK sees off the now-mustachioed Halston, a copy of *Summa Theologica* in his hand.

FATHER JACK

Now that you're past the neo-creationists, see if you can't finish "Part I" on God. You'll find ol' Tom Aquinas relatively uncluttered, if quaint.

HALSTON

Thanks, Father. I'll give it a shot.

FATHER JACK

Good. See you next time.

Halston turns up the alley between the church and the parking garage. Out of the shadows of the alley entrance steps Tough, three friends around him.

TOUGH

Weeeell, Homes - not too crazy today, eh? You dissed me. Time to pay up!

The quartet drags Halston into the shadows, preparing to beat him. Suddenly from their P.O.V. BICYCLE MAN's silhouette is framed in the entrance. He removes his wraparounds and a blinding, highly-charged light emanates from his eyes, enveloping the toughs like cocoons. Immobilized, they are transformed into an energy that snakes out the door and halfway up the alley toward 12th Street. They re-materialize there - standing, unshaken, and totally unaware either of what just happened or the others' presence. They disappear onto 12th Street.

INT. 12TH STREET PARKING GARAGE - NIGHT

Bicycle Man stands over Halston, hand extended.

BICYCLE MAN

You okay? Name's Will.

HALSTON

Wha'? Uh . . .

BICYCLE MAN/WILL

Your search is over, if you want it to be.

HALSTON

Who - Who are you?

BICYCLE MAN/WILL

Not "who," "what:" One of many conductors, whose job is to help keep the train from jumping the tracks.

HALSTON

Are you - GOD?

BICYCLE MAN/WILL

Ain't we a curious lot?
Humans, I mean. Got to have
a picture of an animal to
justify bite marks. Let me
put it this way: If "God" is
the Ol' Watchmaker, I'm a
timekeeper. "Night watchman
of the Soul."

HALSTON

So - you're mortal?

BICYCLE MAN/WILL

Just a pile of meat, closing
in on ashes and dust - with
one Helluva secret weapon.

HALSTON

Okay. Was Jesus -

BICYCLE MAN/WILL

One of us? Yep. And
Krishna. And Buddha. And
Mohammad. Maybe Sai Baba and
Maitreya, too, for all I
know. We don't have cosmic
e-mail.

But, hey. Those guys are
special cases - sometimes the
situation calls you outside
yourself. Every team
produces the occasional Hall-
of-Fame quarterback. Mostly,
we're blockers and tacklers.

HALSTON

Is there another "team?"

BICYCLE MAN/WILL
Army of Darkness? No. I
refer you to the prophet,
Pogo: "We have met the enemy
and he is us."

HALSTON
So, evil's just in US?

BICYCLE MAN/WILL
Just like good. It ain't so
much value judgments as
maintaining some balance.
We're the "refs" -- here to
keep the fight fair.

HALSTON
Why not just leave it to the
battle of wills? Winner take
all.

BICYCLE MAN/WILL
It's about human nature and
perfectibility. Look - when
confronted with a moral
choice, which bottle do most
folks reach for first?
Whoever started this didn't
want it to end in a draw.

HALSTON
Well, what about the
Holocaust, then? How'd that
happen?

BICYCLE MAN/WILL
We were plain outgunned.
Sometimes our cover's blown
and we become targets - like
Salem. That's why we're
partial to anonymity. Once
in a while, the ball just
gets dropped, on a greater or
lesser scale. We're only
human!

HALSTON
Miracles?

BICYCLE MAN/WILL
Eye candy. Keeps folks
interested.

HALSTON
Religion?

BICYCLE MAN/WILL
Structure. Not everybody's
cut out to sleep under the
stars. Some folks need a
tent; others need a roof.
It's for the civilians,
though; got nothin' to do
with us.

HALSTON
Last question -

BICYCLE MAN/WILL
Well, Glory Be!

HALSTON
Why me?

BICYCLE MAN/WILL
I'm past sixty, tired, and
can't break the chain. I got
to recruit a replacement, and
you're qualified. Rootless,
searching, few commitments.
Oh - a random act of rescue
is usually a pretty good
indicator.

Anyway, you got to volunteer.
Let's do lunch at Loaves and
Fishes on Saturday. Then,
you decide.

INT. - LOAVES AND FISHES DINING ROOM - SATURDAY NOON

Halston enters, and finds Bicycle Man/Will standing in the corner, with his bicycle. He silently tosses his head, urging Halston to look around. Halston's eyes fall on a few homeless of varied ages and descriptions. They smile at him and, opening the necks of their clothing, all show him identical amulets.

CLOSE-UP of Bicycle Man/Will's extended hands, one holding an amulet and the other his wraparounds.

BICYCLE MAN/WILL O.S.

You in?

EXT. K STREET MALL - DAY

Time has passed. Dirty, unshaven and threadbare, Halston is sitting cross-legged under a corner awning, rattling coins in a Styrofoam cup and babbling. Adrianna, herself looking worn and defeated, almost passes him by before recognizing him.

ADRIANNA

Hal? Is that you?!

HALSTON

Adrianna? How ARE you?

ADRIANNA

Oh, okay. . .

A beat.

ADRIANNA (CONT.)

My folks went ballistic when I dropped music for art and philosophy, so I had to drop out. Still part-time at Kinko's - I'm probably one lame excuse day from being fired.

Adrianna pauses, struggling to maintain control.

ADRIANNA (CONT.)

Other than that . . .

Halston lowers his wraparounds slightly and there is a flash of light from his eyes.

HALSTON

Can I interest you in some jewelry?

FADE OUT.